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HUMAN LIFE.



HUMAN LIFE,

A POEM.

BY

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THE ARGUMENT.

*Introduction.—Ringing of bells in a neighbouring Village
on the Birth of an Heir.—General Reflections on Human
Life.—The Subject proposed.—Childhood.—Youth.—
Manhood.—Love.—Marriage.—Domestic Happiness
and Affliction.—War.—Peace.—Civil Dissension.—
Retirement from active Life.—Old Age and its Enjoy-
ments.—Conclusion.*



HUMAN LIFE.

THE lark has sung his carol in the sky;
The bees have hummed their noon-tide lullaby.
Still in the vale the village-bells ring round,
Still in Llewellyn-hall the jests resound :
For now the caudle-cup is circling there,
Now, glad at heart, the gossips breathe their prayer,
And, crowding, stop the cradle to admire
The babe, the sleeping image of his sire.

A few short years—and then these sounds shall hail
The day again, and gladness fill the vale ;
So soon the child a youth, the youth a man,
Eager to run the race his fathers ran.
Then the huge ox shall yield the broad sir-loin ;
The ale, now brewed, in floods of amber shine :
And, basking in the chimney's ample blaze,
Mid many a tale told of his boyish days,
The nurse shall cry, of all her ills beguiled,
“ 'Twas on these knees he sate so oft and smiled.”

And soon again shall music swell the breeze ;
Soon, issuing forth, shall glitter through the trees

Vestures of nuptial white; and hymns be sung,
And violets scattered round; and old and young,
In every cottage-porch with garlands green,
Stand still to gaze, and, gazing, bless the scene;
While, her dark eyes declining, by his side
Moves in her virgin-veil the gentle bride.

And once, alas, nor in a distant hour,
Another voice shall come from yonder tower;
When in dim chambers long black weeds are seen,
And weepings heard where only joy has been;
When by his children borne, and from his door
Slowly departing to return no more,
He rests in holy earth with them that went before.

And such is Human Life ; so gliding on,
It glimmers like a meteor, and is gone!
Yet is the tale, brief though it be, as strange,
As full methinks of wild and wondrous change,
As any that the wandering tribes require,
Stretched in the desert round their evening-fire ;
As any sung of old in hall or bower
To minstrel-harps at midnight's witching-hour!

Born in a trance, we wake, reflect, inquire ;
And the green earth, the azure sky admire.
Of Elfin size—for ever as we run,
We cast a longer shadow in the sun!
And now a charm, and now a grace is won!

Yet, all forgot, how oft the eye-lids close,
And from the slack hand drops the gathered rose!
How oft, as dead, on the warm turf we lie,
While many an emmet comes with curious eye;
And on her nest the watchful wren sits by!
Nor do we speak or move, or hear or see;
So like what once we were, and once again shall be!

And say, how soon, where, blithe as innocent,
The boy at sun-rise whistled as he went,
An aged pilgrim on his staff shall lean,
Tracing in vain the footsteps o'er the green;
The man himself how altered, not the scene!
Now journeying home with nothing but the name;
Way-worn and spent, another and the same!

No eye observes the growth or the decay.

To-day we look as we did yesterday;

Yet while the loveliest smiles, her locks grow grey!

And in her glass could she but see the face

She'll see so soon amidst another race,

How would she shrink!—Returning from afar,

After some years of travel, some of war,

Within his gate Ulysses stood unknown

Before a wife, a father, and a son!

And such is Human Life, the general theme.

Ah, what at best, what but a longer dream?

Though with such wild romantic wanderings fraught,

Such forms in Fancy's richest colouring wrought,

That, like the visions of a love-sick brain,
Who would not sleep and dream them o'er again?

Our pathway leads but to a precipice;^a
And all must follow, fearful as it is!
From the first step 'tis known; but—No delay!
On, 'tis decreed. We tremble and obey.
A thousand ills beset us as we go.
—“ Still, could I shun the fatal gulf”—Ah, no,
'Tis all in vain—the inexorable Law!
Nearer and nearer to the brink we draw.
Verdure springs up; and fruits and flowers invite,
And groves and fountains—all things that delight.
“ Oh I would stop, and linger if I might!”

We fly ; no resting for the foot we find ;
All dark before, all desolate behind !
At length the brink appears—but one step more !
We faint—On, on!—we falter—and 'tis o'er !

Yet here high passions, high desires unfold,
Prompting to noblest deeds ; here links of gold
Bind soul to soul ; and thoughts divine inspire
A thirst unquenchable, a holy fire
That will not, cannot but with life expire !

Now, seraph-winged, among the stars we soar ;
Now distant ages, like a day, explore,
And judge the act, the actor now no more ;

Or, in a thankless hour condemned to live,
From others claim what these refuse to give,
And dart, like Milton, an unerring eye
Through the dim curtains of Futurity.^b

Wealth, Pleasure, Ease, all thought of self resigned,
What will not Man encounter for Mankind?
Behold him now unbar the prison-door,
And, lifting Guilt, Contagion from the floor,
To Peace and Health, and Light and Life restore;
Now in Thermopylæ remain to share
Death—nor look back, nor turn a footstep there,
Leaving his story to the birds of air;

And now like Pylades (in Heaven they write
Names such as his in characters of light)
Long with his friend in generous enmity,
Pleading, insisting in his place to die!

Do what he will, he cannot realize
Half he conceives—the glorious vision flies.
Go where he may, he cannot hope to find
The truth, the beauty pictured in his mind.
But if by chance an object strike the sense,
The faintest shadow of that Excellence,
Passions, that slept, are stirring in his frame,
Thoughts undefined, feelings without a name!

And some, not here called forth, may slumber on
Till this vain pageant of a world is gone ;
Lying too deep for things that perish here,
Waiting for life—but in a nobler sphere!

Look where he comes! Rejoicing in his birth,
Awhile he moves as in a heaven on earth!
Sun, moon, and stars—the land, the sea, the sky,
To him shine out as 'twere a galaxy!
But soon 'tis past—the light has died away!
With him it came (it was not of the day)
And he himself diffused it, like the stone^c
That sheds awhile a lustre all its own,

Making night beautiful. 'Tis past, 'tis gone,
And in his darkness as he journies on,
Nothing revives him but the blessed ray
That now breaks in, nor ever knows decay,
Sent from a better world to light him on his way.

How great the Mystery! Let others sing
The circling Year, the promise of the Spring,
The Summer's glory, and the rich repose
Of Autumn, and the Winter's silvery snows.
Man through the changing scene let me pursue,
Himself how wondrous in his changes too!
Not Man, the sullen savage in his den;
But Man called forth in fellowship with men;

Schooled and trained up to Wisdom from his birth;
 God's noblest work—His image upon earth!

The hour arrives, the moment wished and feared;
 The child is born, by many a pang endeared.
 And now the mother's ear has caught his cry;
 Oh grant the cherub to her asking eye!
 He comes---she clasps him. To her bosom pressed,
 He drinks the balm of life, and drops to rest.

Her by her smile how soon the Stranger knows;
 How soon by his the glad discovery shows!
 As to her lips she lifts the lovely boy,
 What answering looks of sympathy and joy!

He walks, he speaks. In many a broken word
His wants, his wishes, and his griefs are heard.
And ever, ever to her lap he flies,
When rosy Sleep comes on with sweet surprise.
Locked in her arms, his arms across her flung,
(That name most dear for ever on his tongue)
As with soft accents round her neck he clings,
And, cheek to cheek, her lulling song she sings,
How blest to feel the beatings of his heart,
Breathe his sweet breath, and kiss for kiss impart;
Watch o'er his slumbers like the brooding dove,
And, if she can, exhaust a mother's love!

But soon a nobler task demands her care.
Apart she joins his little hands in prayer,

Telling of Him who sees in secret there!—

And now the volume on her knee has caught

His wandering eye—now many a written thought

Never to die, with many a lisping sweet

His moving, murmuring lips endeavour to repeat.

Released, he chases the bright butterfly;

Oh he would follow—follow through the sky!

Climbs the gaunt mastiff slumbering in his chain,

And chides and buffets, clinging by the mane;

Then runs, and, kneeling by the fountain-side,

Sends his brave ship in triumph down the tide,

A dangerous voyage; or, if now he can,

If now he wears the habit of a man,

Flings off the coat so long his pride and pleasure,
And, like a miser digging for his treasure,
His tiny spade in his own garden plies,
And in green letters sees his name arise!
Where'er he goes, for ever in her sight,
She looks, and looks, and still with new delight!

Ah who, when fading of itself away,
Would cloud the sunshine of his little day!
Now is the May of Life. Careering round,
Joy wings his feet, Joy lifts him from the ground!
Pointing to such, well might Cornelia say,
When the rich casket shone in bright array,
“These are MY Jewels!” Well of such as he,

When Jesus spake, well might his language be,

“Suffer these little ones to come to me!”^f

Thoughtful by fits, he scans and he reveres
The brow engraven with the Thoughts of Years;
Close by her side his silent homage given
As to some pure Intelligence from Heaven;
His eyes cast downward with ingenuous shame,
His conscious cheeks, conscious of praise or blame,
At once lit up as with a holy flame!
He thirsts for knowledge, speaks but to inquire;
And soon with tears relinquished to the Sire,
Soon in his hand to Wisdom's temple led,
Holds secret converse with the Mighty Dead;

Trembles and thrills and weeps as they inspire,
 Burns as they burn, and with congenial fire!
 Like Her most gentle, most unfortunate,^s
 Crowned but to die—who in her chamber sate
 Musing with Plato, though the horn was blown,
 And every ear and every heart was won,
 And all in green array were chasing down the sun!

Then is the Age of Admiration—Then^h
 Gods walk the earth, or beings more than men!
 Ha! then comes thronging many a wild desire,
 And high imagining and thought of fire!
 Then from within a voice exclaims “Aspire!”
 Phantoms, that upward point, before him pass,
 As in the Cave athwart the Wizard’s glass;

They, that on Youth a grace, a lustre shed,
 Of every age—the living and the dead !
 Thou, all-accomplished Surrey, thou art known ;
 The flower of Knighthood, nipt as soon as blown !
 Melting all hearts but Geraldine's alone !
 And, with his beaver up, discovering there
 One who loved less to conquer than to spare,
 Lo, the Black Warrior, he, who, battle-spent,
 Bare-headed served the Captive in his tent !
 Young B——n in the groves of Academe,
 Or where Ilyssus winds his whispering stream ;
 Or where the wild bees swarm with ceaseless hum,
 Dreaming old dreams—a joy for years to come ;
 Or on the Rock within the sacred Fane ;—
 Scenes such as Milton sought, but sought in vain :ⁱ

And Milton's self, apart with beaming eye,^k
 Planning he knows not what—that shall not die!

Oh in thy truth secure, thy virtue bold,
 Beware the poison in the cup of gold,
 The asp among the flowers. Thy heart beats high,
 As bright and brighter breaks the distant sky!
 But every step is on enchanted ground.
 Danger thou lov'st, and Danger haunts thee round.

Who spurs his horse against the mountain-side;
 Then, plunging, slakes his fury in the tide?
 Cries ho, and draws; and, where the sun-beams fall,
 At his own shadow thrusts along the wall?

Who dances without music; and anon
Sings like the lark—then sighs as woe-begone,
And folds his arms, and, where the willows wave,
Glides in the moon-shine by a maiden's grave?
Come hither, boy, and clear thy open brow.
Yon summer-clouds, now like the Alps, and now
A ship, a whale, change not so fast as thou.

He hears me not. Those sighs were from the heart.
'Too, too well taught, he plays the lover's part.
He who at masques, nor feigning nor sincere,
With sweet discourse would win a lady's ear,
Lie at her feet and on her slipper swear
That none were half so faultless, half so fair,

Now through the forest hies, a stricken deer,
A banished man, flying when none are near ;
And writes on every tree, and lingers long
Where most the nightingale repeats her song ;
Where most the nymph, that haunts the silent grove,
Delights to syllable the names we love

At length he goes—a Pilgrim to the Shrine,
And for a relic would a world resign !
A glove, a shoe-tye, or a flower let fall—
What though the least, Love consecrates them all !
And now he breathes in many a plaintive verse ;
Now wins the dull ear of the wily nurse

At early matins ('twas at matin-time¹
That first he saw and sickened in his prime)
And soon the Sibyl, in her thirst for gold,
Plays with young hearts that will not be controlled.

“Absence from Thee—as self from self it seems!”
Scaled is the garden-wall; and lo, her beams
Silvering the east, the moon comes up, revealing
His well-known form along the terrace stealing.
—Oh, ere in sight he came, 'twas his to thrill
A heart that loved him though in secret still.
“Am I awake? or is it . . . can it be
“An idle dream that nightly visits me?”

“That strain,” she cries, “as from the water rose.

“Now near and nearer through the shade it flows!—

“Now sinks departing—sweetest in its close!”

No casement gleams; no Juliet, like the day,

Comes forth and speaks and bids her lover stay.

Still, like aërial music heard from far,

Nightly it rises with the evening-star.

—“She loves another! Love was in that sigh!”

On the cold ground he throws himself to die.

Fond Youth, beware. Thy heart is most deceiving

Who wish are fearful; who suspect, believing.

—And soon her looks the rapturous truth avow.

Lovely before, oh say how lovely now!”

She flies not, frowns not, though he pleads his cause ;
Nor yet—nor yet her hand from his withdraws :
But by some secret Power surprized, subdued,
(Ah how resist ? Nor would she if she could.)
Falls on his neck as half unconscious where,
Glad to conceal her tears, her blushes there.

Then come those full confidings of the past :
All sunshine now where all was overcast.
Then do they wander till the day is gone,
Lost in each other ; and, when Night steals on,
Covering them round, how sweet her accents are !
Oh when she turns and speaks, her voice is far,

Far above singing!—But soon nothing stirs
To break the silence—Joy like his, like hers,
Deals not in words; and now the shadows close,
Now in the glimmering, dying light she grows
Less and less earthly! As departs the day
All that was mortal seems to melt away,
Till, like a gift resumed as soon as given,
She fades at last into a Spirit from Heaven!

Then are they blest indeed; and swift the hours
Till her young Sisters wreathe her hair in flowers,
Kindling her beauty—while, unseen, the least
Twitches her robe, then runs behind the rest,
Known by her laugh that will not be suppressed.

Then before All they stand—the holy vow
And ring of gold, no fond illusions now,
Bind her as his. Across the threshold led,
And every tear kissed off as soon as shed,
His house she enters, there to be a light
Shining within, when all without is night ;
A guardian-angel o'er his life presiding,
Doubling his pleasures, and his cares dividing !
How oft her eyes read his ; her gentle mind
To all his wishes, all his thoughts inclined ;
Still subject—ever on the watch to borrow
Mirth of his mirth, and sorrow of his sorrow.
The soul of music slumbers in the shell,
Till waked to rapture by the master's spell ;

And feeling hearts—touch them but rightly—pour
A thousand melodies unheard before!

Nor many moons o'er hill and valley rise
Ere to the gate with nymph-like step she flies,
And their first-born holds forth, their darling boy,
With smiles how sweet, how full of love and joy,
To meet him coming; theirs through every year
Pure transports, such as each to each endear!
And laughing eyes and laughing voices fill
Their halls with gladness. She, when all are still,
Comes and undraws the curtain as they lie,
In sleep how beautiful! He, when the sky
Gleams, and the wood sends up its harmony,

When, gathering round his bed, they climb to share
His kisses, and with gentle violence there
Break in upon a dream not half so fair,
Up to the hill-top leads their little feet;
Or by the forest-lodge, perchance to meet
The stag-herd on its march, perchance to hear
The otter rustling in the sedgy mere;
Or to the echo near the Abbot's tree,
That gave him back his words of pleasantry—
When the House stood, no merrier man than he!
And, as they wander with a keen delight,
If but a leveret catch their quicker sight
Down a green alley, or a squirrel then
Climb the gnarled oak, and look and climb again,

If but a moth flit by, an acorn fall,
He turns their thoughts to Him who made them all ;
These with unequal footsteps following fast,
These clinging by his cloak, unwilling to be last.

The shepherd on Tornaro's misty brow,
And the swart seaman, sailing far below,
Not undelighted watch the morning-ray
Purpling the orient—till it breaks away,
And burns and blazes into glorious day!
But happier still is he who turns to trace
That sun, the soul, just dawning in the face ;
The burst, the glow, the animating strife,
The thoughts and passions stirring into life ;

The forming utterance, the inquiring glance,
The giant waking from his ten-fold trance,
Till up he starts as conscious whence he came,
And all is light within the trembling frame !

What then a Father's feelings ? Joy and Fear
Prevail in turn, Joy most ; and through the year
Tempering the ardent, urging night and day
Him who shrinks back or wanders from the way,
Praising each highly—from a wish to raise
Their merits to the level of his Praise,
Onward in their observing sight he moves,
Fearful of wrong, in awe of whom he loves !
Their sacred presence who shall dare profane ?
Who, when He slumbers, hope to fix a stain ?

He lives a model in his life to show,
That, when he dies and through the world they go,
Some men may pause and say, when some admire,
“ They are his sons, and worthy of their sire ! ”

But Man is born to suffer. On the door
Sickness has set her mark ; and now no more
Laughter within we hear, or wood-notes wild
As of a mother singing to her child.
All now in anguish from that room retire,
Where a young cheek glows with consuming fire,
And Innocence breathes contagion—all but one,
But she who gave it birth—from her alone

The medicine-cup is taken. Through the night,
And through the day, that with its dreary light
Comes unregarded, she sits silent by,
Watching the changes with her anxious eye :
While they without, listening below, above,
(Who but in sorrow know how much they love ?)
From every little noise catch hope and fear,
Exchanging still, still as they turn to hear,
Whispers and sighs, and smiles all tenderness
That would in vain the starting tear repress.

Such grief was ours—it seems but yesterday—
When in thy prime, wishing so much to stay,

'Twas thine, Maria, thine without a sigh
At midnight in a Sister's arms to die !
Oh thou wert lovely—lovely was thy frame,
And pure thy spirit as from Heaven it came !
And, when recalled to join the blest above,
Thou diedst a victim to exceeding love,
Nursing the young to health. In happier hours,
When idle Fancy wove luxuriant flowers,
Once in thy mirth thou badst me write on thee ;
And now I write—what thou shalt never see !

At length the Father, vain his power to save,
Follows his child in silence to the grave,

(That child how cherished, whom he would not give,
 Sleeping the sleep of death, for all that live ;)
 Takes a last look, when, not unheard, the spade
 Scatters the earth as “ dust to dust ” is said,
 Takes a last look and goes ; his best relief
 Consoling others in that hour of grief,
 And with sweet tears and gentle words infusing
 The holy calm that leads to heavenly musing.

—But hark, the din of arms! no time for sorrow.
 To horse, to horse ! A day of blood to-morrow!
 One parting pang, and then—and then I fly,
 Fly to the field to triumph—or to die!—

He goes, and Night comes as it never came !ⁿ
With shrieks of horror !—and a vault of flame !
And lo ! when morning mocks the desolate,
Red runs the river by ; and at the gate
Breathless a horse without his rider stands !
But hush ! . . a shout from the victorious bands !
And oh the smiles and tears, a sire restored !
One wears his helm, one buckles on his sword ;
One hangs the wall with laurel-leaves, and all
Spring to prepare the soldier's festival ;
While She best-loved, till then forsaken never,
Clings round his neck as she would cling for ever !

Such golden deeds lead on to golden days,
Days of domestic peace—by him who plays

On the great stage how uneventful thought ;
Yet with a thousand busy projects fraught,
A thousand incidents that stir the mind
To pleasure, such as leaves no sting behind !
Such as the heart delights in—and records
Within how silently—in more than words !
A Holiday—the frugal banquet spread
On the fresh herbage near the fountain-head
With quips and cranks-- what time the wood-lark there
Scatters her loose notes on the sultry air,
What time the king-fisher sits perched below,
Where, silver-bright, the water-lilies blow :—
A Wake—the booths whitening the village-green,
Where Punch and Scaramouch aloft are seen ;

Sign beyond sign in close array unfurled,
 Picturing at large the wonders of the world;
 And far and wide, over the vicar's pále,
 Black hoods and scarlet crossing hill and dale,
 All, all abroad, and music in the gale :—
 A Wedding-dance—a dance into the night
 On the barn-floor, when maiden-feet are light ;
 When the young bride receives the promised dower,
 And flowers are flung, ' herself a fairer flower : '—
 A morning-visit to the poor man's shed,
 (Who would be rich while One was wanting bread ?)
 When all are emulous to bring relief,
 And tears are falling fast—but not for grief :—
 A Walk in Spring—Gr-tt-n, like those with thee,
 By the heath-side (who had not envied me?)

When the sweet limes, so full of bees in June,
Led us to meet beneath their boughs at noon;
And thou didst say which of the Great and Wise,
Could they but hear and at thy bidding rise,
Thou wouldst call up and question.

Graver things

Come in their turn. Morning, and Evening, brings
Its holy office; and the sabbath-bell,
That over wood and wild and mountain-dell
Wanders so far, chasing all thoughts unholy
With sounds 'most musical, most melancholy,'
Not on his ear is lost. Then he pursues
The pathway leading through the aged yews,

Nor unattended; and, when all are there,
Pours out his spirit in the House of Prayer,
That House with many a funeral-garland hung°
Of virgin-white—memorials of the young,
The last yet fresh when marriage-chimes were ringing,
And hope and joy in other hearts were springing;
That House where Age led in by Filial Love,
Their looks composed, their thoughts on things above,
The world forgot, or all its wrongs forgiven——
Who would not say they trod the path to Heaven?

Nor at the fragrant hour—at early dawn—
Under the beech-tree on his level lawn,
Or in his porch is he less duly found,
When they that cry for Justice gather round,

And in that cry her sacred voice is drowned ;
 His then to hear and weigh and arbitrate,
 Like Alfred judging at his palace-gate.
 Healed at his touch, the wounds of discord close ;
 And they return as friends, that came as foes.

Thus, while the world but claims its proper part,
 Oft in the head but never in the heart,
 His life steals on ; within his quiet dwelling
 That home-felt joy all other joys excelling.
 Sick of the crowd, when enters he—nor then
 Forgets the cold indifference of men?
 —But nothing lasts. In Autumn at his plough
 Met and solicited, behold him now

Serving the State again—not as before,
 Not foot to foot, the war-whoop at his door,—
 But in the Senate ; and (though round him fly
 The jest, the sneer, the subtle sophistry,)
 With honest dignity, with manly sense,
 And every charm of natural eloquence,
 Like Hampden struggling in his Country's cause,^a
 The first, the foremost to obey the laws,
 The last to brook oppression. On he moves,
 Careless of blame while his own heart approves,
 Careless of ruin—(“ For the general good
 'Tis not the first time I shall shed my blood.”)
 On through that gate misnamed, through which before
 Went Sidney, Russel, Raleigh, Cranmer, More,

On into twilight within walls of stone,
 Then to the place of trial ;^t and alone,^t
 Alone before his judges in array
 Stands for his life : there, on that awful day,
 Counsel of friends—all human help denied—
 All but from her who sits the pen to guide,
 Like that sweet Saint who sate by Russel's side^u
 Under the Judgment-seat.—But guilty men
 Triumph not always. To his hearth again,
 Again with honour to his hearth restored,
 Lo, in the accustomed chair and at the board,
 Thrice greeting those that most withdraw their claim,
 (The humblest servant calling by his name)

He reads thanksgiving in the eyes of all,
All met as at a holy festival!
—On the day destined for his funeral!
Lo, there the Friend, who, entering where he lay,
Breathed in his drowsy ear “ Away, away!
Take thou *my* cloak—Nay, start not, but obey—
Take it and leave me.” And the blushing Maid,
Who through the streets as through a desert strayed;
And, when her dear, dear Father passed along,
Would not be held—but, bursting through the throng,
Halberd and battle-axe—kissed him o’er and o’er;
Then turned and went—then sought him as before,
Believing she should see his face no more!

And oh, how changed at once—no heroine here,
But a weak woman worn with grief and fear,
Her darling Mother! 'Twas but now she smiled,
And now she weeps upon her weeping child!
—But who sits by, her only wish below
At length fulfilled—and now prepared to go?
His hands on hers—as through the mists of night,
She gazes on him with imperfect sight;
Her glory now, as ever her delight!*
—'To her, methinks, a second Youth is given;
The light upon her face a light from Heaven!

An hour like this is worth a thousand passed
In pomp or ease—"Tis present to the last!

Years glide away untold—'Tis still the same!
As fresh, as fair as on the day it came!

And now once more where most he loved to be,
In his own fields—breathing tranquillity—
We hail him—not less happy, Fox, than thee!
Thee at St. Anne's so soon of Care beguiled,
Playful, sincere, and artless as a child!
Thee, who wouldst watch a bird's nest on the spray,
Through the green leaves exploring, day by day.
How oft from grove to grove, from seat to seat,
With thee conversing in thy loved retreat,
I saw the sun go down!—Ah, then 'twas thine
Ne'er to forget some volume half divine,

Shakspeare's or Dryden's—thro' the chequered shade
 Borne in thy hand behind thee as we strayed;
 And where we sate (and many a halt we made)
 To read there with a fervour all thy own,
 And in thy grand and melancholy tone,
 Some splendid passage not to thee unknown,
 Fit theme for long discourse.—Thy bell has tolled!
 —But in thy place among us we behold
 One that resembles thee.

'Tis the sixth hour.

The village-clock strikes from the distant tower.
 The ploughman leaves the field; the traveller hears,
 And to the inn spurs forward. Nature wears

Her sweetest smile ; the day-star in the west
Yet hovering, and the thistle's down at rest.

And such, his labour done, the calm He knows,
Whose footsteps we have followed. Round him glows
An atmosphere that brightens to the last ;
The light, that shines, reflected from the Past,
—And from the Future too ! Active in Thought
Among old books, old friends ; and not unsought
By the wise stranger—in his morning-hours,
When gentle airs stir the fresh-blowing flowers,
He muses, turning up the idle weed ;
Or prunes or grafts, or in the yellow mead

Watches his bees at hiving-time; and now,
The ladder resting on the orchard-bough,
Culls the delicious fruit that hangs in air,
The purple plum, green fig, or golden pear,
Mid sparkling eyes, and hands uplifted there.

At night, when all, assembling round the fire,
Closer and closer draw till they retire,
A tale is told of India or Japan,
Of merchants from Golcond or Astracan,
What time wild Nature revelled unrestrained,
And Sinbad voyaged and the Caliphs reigned;—
Of some Norwegian, while the icy gale
Rings in the shrouds and beats the iron sail,

Among the snowy Alps of Polar seas
Immoveable—for ever there to freeze !
Or some great Caravan, from well to well
Winding as darkness on the desert fell,
In their long march, such as the Prophet bids,
To Mecca from the Land of Pyramids,
And in an instant lost—a hollow wave
Of burning sand their everlasting grave !—
Now the scene shifts to Venice—to a square
Glittering with light, all nations masking there,
With light reflected on the tremulous tide,
Where gondolas in gay confusion glide,
Answering the jest, the song on every side ;

To Naples next—and at the crowded gate,
 Where Grief and Fear and wild Amazement wait,
 Lo, on his back a Son brings in his Sire,⁷
 Vesuvius blazing like a World on fire!—
 Then, at a sign that never was forgot,
 A strain breaks forth (who hears and loves it not?)
 From lute or organ! 'Tis at parting given,
 That in their slumbers they may dream of Heaven;
 Young voices mingling, as it floats along,
 In Tuscan air or Handel's sacred song!

And She inspires, whose beauty shines in all;
 So soon to weave a daughter's coronal,

And at the nuptial rite smile through her tears ;—
So soon to hover round her full of fears,
And with assurance sweet her soul revive
In child-birth—when a mother's love is most alive !

No, 'tis not here that Solitude is known.
Through the wide world he only is alone
Who lives not for another. Come what will,
The generous man has his companion still ;
The cricket on his hearth ; the buzzing fly
That skims his roof, or, be his roof the sky,
Still with its note of gladness passes by :
And, in an iron cage condemned to dwell,
The cage that stands within the dungeon-cell,

He feeds his spider—happier at the worst
Than he at large who in himself is curst !

Oh thou all-eloquent, whose mighty mind^z
Streams from the depth of ages on mankind,
Streams like the day—who, angel-like, hast shed
Thy full effulgence on the hoary head,
Speaking in Cato's venerable voice,
“ Look up, and faint not—faint not, but rejoice !”
From thy Elysium guide him. Age has now
Stamped with its signet that ingenuous brow ;
And, 'mid his old hereditary trees,
Trees he has climbed so oft, he sits and sees
His children's children playing round his knees :

Then happiest, youngest, when the quoit is flung,
 When side by side the archers' bows are strung ;
 His to prescribe the place, adjudge the prize,
 Envy no more the young their energies
 Than they an old man when his words are wise ;
 His a delight how pure . . . without alloy ;
 Strong in their strength, rejoicing in their joy !

Now in their turn assisting, they repay
 The anxious cares of many and many a day ;
 And now by those he loves relieved, restored,
 His very wants and weaknesses afford
 A feeling of enjoyment. In his walks,
 Leaning on them, how oft he stops and talks,

While they look up! Their questions, their replies,
Fresh as the welling waters, round him rise,
Gladdening his spirit: and his theme the past,
How eloquent he is! His thoughts flow fast;
And while his heart (oh can the heart grow old?
False are the tales that in the World are told!)
Swells in his voice, he knows not where to end;
Like one discoursing of an absent friend.

But there are moments which he calls his own.
Then, never less alone than when alone,
Those that he loved so long and sees no more,
Loved and still loves—not dead—but gone before,

He gathers round him ; and revives at will
 Scenes in his life—that breathe enchantment still—
 That come not now at dreary intervals —
 But where a light as from the Blessed falls,
 A light such guests bring ever—pure and holy—
 Lapping the soul in sweetest melancholy!
 —Ah then less willing (nor the choice condemn)
 To live with others than to think on them !

And now behold him up the hill ascending,
 Memory and Hope like evening-stars attending ;
 Sustained, excited, till his course is run,
 By deeds of virtue done or to be done.

When on his couch he sinks at length to rest,
Those by his counsel saved, his power redressed,
Those by the World shunned ever as unblest,
At whom the rich man's dog growls from the gate,
But whom he sought out, sitting desolate,
Come and stand round—the widow with her child,
As when she first forgot her tears and smiled!
They, who watch by him, see not; but he sees,
Sees and exults—Were ever dreams like these?
They, who watch by him, hear not; but he hears,
And Earth recedes, and Heaven itself appears!

"Tis past! That hand we grasped, alas, in vain!
Nor shall we look upon his face again!

But to his closing eyes, for all were there,
Nothing was wanting ; and, through many a year,
We shall remember with a fond delight
The words so precious which we heard to-night ;
His parting, though awhile our sorrow flows,
Like setting suns or music at the close !

Then was the drama ended. Not till then,
So full of chance and change the lives of men,
Could we pronounce him happy. Then secure
From pain, from grief, and all that we endure,
He slept in peace—say rather soared to Heaven,
Upborne from Earth by Him to whom 'tis given

In his right hand to hold the golden key
That opes the portals of Eternity.
When by a good man's grave I muse alone,
Methinks an Angel sits upon the stone ;
Like those of old, on that thrice-hallowed night,
Who sate and watched in raiment heavenly-bright ;
And, with a voice inspiring joy not fear,
Says, pointing upward, that he is not here,
That he is risen !

But the day is spent ;
And stars are kindling in the firmament,
To us how silent—though like ours perchance
Busy and full of life and circumstance ;

Where some the paths of Wealth and Power pursue,
Of Pleasure some, of Happiness a few;
And, as the sun goes round—a sun not ours—
While from her lap another Nature showers
Gifts of her own, some from the crowd retire,
Think on themselves, within, without inquire;
At distance dwell on all that passes there,
All that their world reveals of good and fair;
And, as they wander, picturing things, like me,
Not as they are but as they ought to be,
Trace out the Journey through their little Day,
And fondly dream an idle hour away.

N O T E S.



N O T E S.

NOTE a. Page 13, line 3.

Our pathway leads but to a precipice;

See BOSSUET, Sermon sur la Résurrection.

NOTE b. Page 15, line 4.

Through the dim curtains of Futurity.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked his reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting, without impatience, the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

JOHNSON.

NOTE c. Page 17, line 11.

like the stone

That sheds awhile a lustre all its own.

See 'Observations on a Diamond that shines in the dark.'

BOYLE'S Works, I. 789.

NOTE d. Page 19, line 1.

Schooled and trained up to Wisdom from his birth;

Cicero, in his Essay *De Senectute*, has drawn his images from the better walks of life; and Shakspeare, in his *Seven Ages*, has done so too. But Shakspeare treats his subject satirically; Cicero as a Philosopher. In the dignified portrait of Cato we discover no traces of "the lean and slippered Pantaloon."

Every object has a bright and a dark side; and I have endeavoured to look at things as Cicero has done. By some however I may be thought to have followed too much my own dream of happiness; and in such a dream indeed I have often passed a solitary hour. It was Castle-building once; now it is no longer so. But whoever would try to realize it, would not perhaps repent of his endeavour.

NOTE e. Page 22, line 13.

"These are MY Jewels!"

The anecdote, here alluded to, is related by Valerius Maximus, Lib. iv. c. 4.

NOTE f. Page 23, line 2.

"Suffer these little ones to come to me!"

In our early Youth, while yet we live only among those we love, we love without restraint, and our hearts overflow in every look, word, and action. But when we enter the world and are repulsed by strangers, forgotten by friends, we grow more and more timid in our approaches even to those we love best.

How delightful to us then are the little caresses of children! All sincerity, all affection, they fly into our arms; and then, and then only, we feel our first confidence, our first pleasure.

NOTE g. Page 24, line 3.

Like Her most gentle, most unfortunate,

Before I went into Germany, I came to Brodegate in Leicestershire, to take my leave of that noble Lady Jane Grey, to whom I was exceeding much beholding. Her Parents, the Duke and

Duchess, with all the Houshold, Gentlemen and Gentlewomen, were hunting in the Park. I found her in her chamber, reading Phædo Platonis in Greek, and that with as much delight as some Gentlemen would read a merry tale in Boccace. After salutation, and duty done, with some other talk, I asked her, why she would lose such pastime in the park? Smiling, she answered me; "I wist, all their sport in the park is but a shadow to that pleasure that I find in Plato."

ROGER ASCHAM.

NOTE h. Page 24, line 8.

Then is the Age of Admiration—

Dante was pointed out to Petrarch when a boy; and Dryden to Pope.

Who does not wish that Dante and Dryden could have known the value of the homage that was paid them, and foreseen the greatness of their young admirers?

NOTE i. Page 25, line 15.

Scenes such as Milton sought, but sought in vain:

He had arrived at Naples; and was preparing to visit Sicily and Greece, when, hearing of the troubles in England, he thought it proper to hasten home.

NOTE k. Page 26, line 1.

And Milton's self

I began thus far to assent . . . to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intent study, (which I take to be my portion in this life) joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times, as they should not willingly let it die.

MILTON.

NOTE l. Page 29, line 1.

——'twas at *matin-time*

Love and Devotion are said to be nearly allied. Boccaccio fell in love at Naples in the church of St. Lorenzo; as Petrarch had done at Avignon in the church of St. Clair.

NOTE m. Page 30, line 13.

Lovely before, oh say how lovely now!

Is it not true, that the Young not only appear to be, but really are most beautiful in the presence of those they love? It calls forth all their beauty.

NOTE n. Page 42, line 1.

He goes, and Night comes as it never came!

These circumstances, as well as some others that follow, are happily, as far as they regard England, of an antient date. To us the miseries inflicted by a foreign invader are now known only by description. Many generations have passed away since our country-women saw the smoke of an enemy's camp.

But the same passions are always at work every where, and their effects are always nearly the same; though the circumstances that attend them are infinitely various.

NOTE o. Page 46, line 3.

That house with many a funeral-garland hung

A custom in some of our Country churches.

NOTE q. Page 48, line 7.

Like Hampden struggling in his Country's cause,

Zeuxis is said to have drawn his Helen from an assemblage of the most beautiful women; and many a Writer of Fiction, in forming a life to his mind, has recourse to the brightest moments in the lives of others.

I may be suspected of having done so here, and of having designed, as it were, from living models; but, by making an allusion now and then to those who have really lived, I thought I should give something of interest to the picture, as well as better illustrate my meaning.

NOTE r. Page 48, line 13.

On through that gate misnamed,

Traitor's gate; the water-gate in the Tower of London.

NOTE s. Page 49, line 2.

Then to the place of trial;

This very slight sketch of Civil Dissension is taken from our own annals; but, for an obvious reason, not from those of our own age.

The persons here immediately alluded to lived more than a hundred years ago in a reign which Blackstone has justly represented as wicked, sanguinary, and turbulent; but such times have always afforded the most signal instances of heroic courage and ardent affection.

Great reverses, like theirs, lay open the human heart. They occur indeed but seldom; yet all men are liable to them; all, when they occur to others, make them more or less their own; and, were we to describe our condition to an inhabitant of some other planet, could we omit what forms so striking a circumstance in human life?

NOTE t. Page 49, line 2.

and alone,

In the reign of William the Third the law was altered. A prisoner, prosecuted for high treason, may now make his full defence by counsel.

NOTE u. Page 49, line 7.

*Like that sweet Saint who sate by Russel's side
Under the Judgment-seat.*

Lord Russel. May I have somebody write to help my memory?

Mr. Attorney General. Yes, a Servant.

Lord Chief Justice. Any of your Servants shall assist you in writing any thing you please for you.

Lord Russel. My Wife is here, my Lord, to do it.

STATE TRIALS, II.

NOTE x. Page 51, line 9.

Her glory now, as ever her delight!

Epaminondas, after his victory at Leuctra, rejoiced most of all at the pleasure which it would give his father and mother; and who would not have envied them their feelings?

Cornelia was called at Rome the mother-in-law of Scipio. "When," said she to her sons, "shall I be called the mother of the Gracchi?"

NOTE y. Page 57, line 3.

Lo, on his back a Son brings in his Sire,

An act of filial piety recorded on an old Greek coin.

NOTE z. Page 59, line 3.

Oh thou, all-eloquent, whose mighty mind

Cicero. It is remarkable that, among the comforts of Old Age, he has not mentioned those arising from the society of women and children. Perhaps the husband of Terentia and 'the father of Marcus felt something on the subject, of which he was willing to spare himself the recollection.'



LINES
WRITTEN AT PÆSTUM,
MARCH 4, 1815.

LINES WRITTEN AT PÆSTUM.

THEY stand between the mountains and the sea ;

Awful memorials, but of whom we know not ! *

The seaman, passing, gazes from the deck.

The buffalo-driver, in his shaggy cloak,

* The temples of Pæstum are three in number ; and have survived, nearly nine centuries, the total destruction of the city. Tradition is silent concerning them ; but they must have existed now between two and three thousand years.

Points to the work of magic and moves on.
Time was they stood along the crowded street,
Temples of Gods ! and on their ample steps
What various habits, various tongues beset
The brazen gates for prayer and sacrifice !
Time was perhaps the third was sought for Justice ;
And here the accuser stood, and there the accused ;
And here the judges sate, and heard, and judged.
All silent now!—as in the ages past,
Trodden under foot and mingled, dust with dust

How many centuries did the sun go round
From Mount Alburnus to the Tyrrhene sea,
While, by some spell rendered invisible,

Or, if approached, approached by him alone
Who saw as though he saw not, they remained
As in the darkness of a sepulchre,
Waiting the appointed time! All, all within
Proclaims that Nature had resumed her right,
And taken to herself what man renounced;
No cornice, triglyph, or worn abacus,
But with thick ivy hung or branching fern,
Their iron-brown o'erspread with brightest verdure!

From my youth upward have I longed to tread
This classic ground.—And am I here at last?
Wandering at will through the long porticoes,
And catching, as through some majestic grove,

Now the blue ocean, and now, chaos-like,
 Mountains and mountain-gulphs, and, half-way up,
 Towns like the living rock from which they grew?
 A cloudy region, black and desolate,
 Where once a slave withstood a world in arms. *

The air is sweet with violets, running wild †
 Mid broken sculptures and fallen capitals ;
 Sweet as when Tully, writing down his thoughts, ‡
 Those thoughts so precious and so lately lost,

* Spartacus. See Plutarch in the Life of Crassus.

† The violets of Pæstum were as proverbial as the roses. Martial mentions them with the honey of Hybla.

‡ The introduction to his treatise on Glory. Cic. ad Att. xvi. 6. For an account of the loss of that treatise, see Petrarch, Epist. Rer. Senilium. xv. 1, and Bayle, Dict. in Alcyonius.

Turning to thee, divine Philosophy,
Who ever cam'st to calm his troubled soul,
Sailed slowly by, two thousand years ago,
For Athens ; when a ship, if north-east winds
Blew from the Pæstan gardens, slacked her course.

On as he moved along the level shore,
These temples, in their splendour eminent
Mid arcs and obelisks, and domes and towers,
Reflecting back the radiance of the west,
Well might he dream of Glory!—Now, coiled up,
The serpent sleeps within them ; the she-wolf
Suckles her young: and, as alone I stand

In this, the nobler pile, the elements
Of earth and air its only floor and covering,
How solemn is the stillness! Nothing stirs
Save the shrill-voiced cigala flitting round
On the rough pediment to sit and sing ;
Or the green lizard rustling through the grass,
And up the fluted shaft with short quick motion,
To vanish in the chinks that Time has made.

In such an hour as this, the sun's broad disk
Seen at his setting, and a flood of light
Filling the courts of these old sanctuaries,
(Gigantic shadows, broken and confused,
Across the innumerable columns flung)

In such an hour he came, who saw and told,
 Led by the mighty Genius of the Place.*

Walls of some capital city first appeared,
 Half razed, half sunk, or scattered as in scorn;
 —And what within them? what but in the midst
 These Three in more than their original grandeur,
 And, round about, no stone upon another?
 As if the spoiler had fallen back in fear,
 And, turning, left them to the elements.

'Tis said a stranger in the days of old
 (Some say a Dorian, some a Sybarite;

* They are said to have been discovered by accident about the middle of the last century.

But distant things are ever lost in clouds)
 'Tis said a stranger came, and, with his plough,
 Traced out the site ; and Posidonia rose,*
 Severely great, Neptune the tutelar God ;
 A Homer's language murmuring in her streets,
 And in her haven many a mast from Tyre.
 Then came another, an unbidden guest.
 He knocked and entered with a train in arms ;
 And all was changed, her very name and language !
 The Tyrian merchant, shipping at his door
 Ivory and gold, and silk, and frankincense,

* Originally a Greek city under that name, and afterwards a Roman city under the name of Pæstum. See Mitford's Hist. of Greece, chap. x. sect. 2. It was surprised and destroyed by the Saracens at the beginning of the tenth century.

Sailed as before, but, sailing, cried "For Pæstum!"

And now a Virgil, now an Ovid sung

Pæstum's twice-blowing roses; while, within,

Parents and children mourned; and, every year,

("Twas on the day of some old festival)

Met to give way to tears, and, once again,

Talk in the antient tongue of things gone by.*

At length an Arab climbed the battlements,

Slaying the sleepers in the dead of night;

And from all eyes the glorious vision fled!

Leaving a place lonely and dangerous,

Where whom the robber spares, a deadlier foe†

Strikes at unseen—and at a time when joy

* Athenæus, xiv.

† The Mal'aria.

Opens the heart, when summer-skies are blue,
And the clear air is soft and delicate ;
For then the demon works—then with that air
The thoughtless wretch drinks in a subtle poison
Lulling to sleep ; and, when he sleeps, he dies.

But what are These still standing in the midst?
The Earth has rocked beneath ; the Thunder-stone
Passed through and through, and left its traces there ;
Yet still they stand as by some Unknown Charter !
Oh, they are Nature's own ! and, as allied
To the vast Mountains and the eternal Sea,
They want no written history ; theirs a voice
For ever speaking to the heart of man !

THE BOY OF EGREMOND.

In the twelfth century William Fitz-Duncan laid waste the vallies of Craven with fire and sword; and was afterwards established there by his uncle, David King of Scotland.

He was the last of the race; his son, commonly called the Boy of Egremond, dying before him in the manner here related; when a Priory was removed from Embsay to Bolton, that it might be as near as possible to the place where the accident happened. That place is still known by the name of the *Strid*; and the mother's answer, as given in the first stanza, is to this day often repeated in Wharfe-dale.

See WHITAKER'S Hist. of Craven.

THE BOY OF EGREMOND.

“ SAY what remains when Hope is fled.”

She answered, “ Endless weeping!”

For in the herds-man’s eye she read

Who in his shroud lay sleeping.

At EMBSAY rung the matin-bell,

The stag was roused on Barden-fell;

The mingled sounds were swelling, dying,

And down the Wharfe a hern was flying;

When near the cabin in the wood,
In tartan clad and forest-green,
With hound in leash and hawk in hood,
The Boy of Egremond was seen.
Blithe was his song, a song of yore,
But where the rock is rent in two,
And the river rushes through,
His voice was heard no more!
"Twas but a step! the gulph he passed.
But that step—it was his last!
As through the mist he winged his way,
A cloud that hovers night and day,
The hound hung back, and back he drew
The Master and his merlin too.

That narrow place of noise and strife
Received their little all of Life!

There now the matin-bell is rung ;
The “ Miserere !” duly sung ;
And holy men in cowl and hood
Are wandering up and down the wood.
But what avail they? Ruthless Lord,
Thou didst not shudder when the sword
Here on the young its fury spent,
The helpless and the innocent.
Sit now and answer groan for groan.
The child before thee is thy own.

And she who wildly wanders there,
The mother in her long despair,
Shall oft remind thee, waking, sleeping,
Of those who by the Wharfe were weeping ;
Of those who would not be consoled
When red with blood the river rolled.

ALBEMARLE-STREET, LONDON,
JANUARY, 1819.

MR. MURRAY

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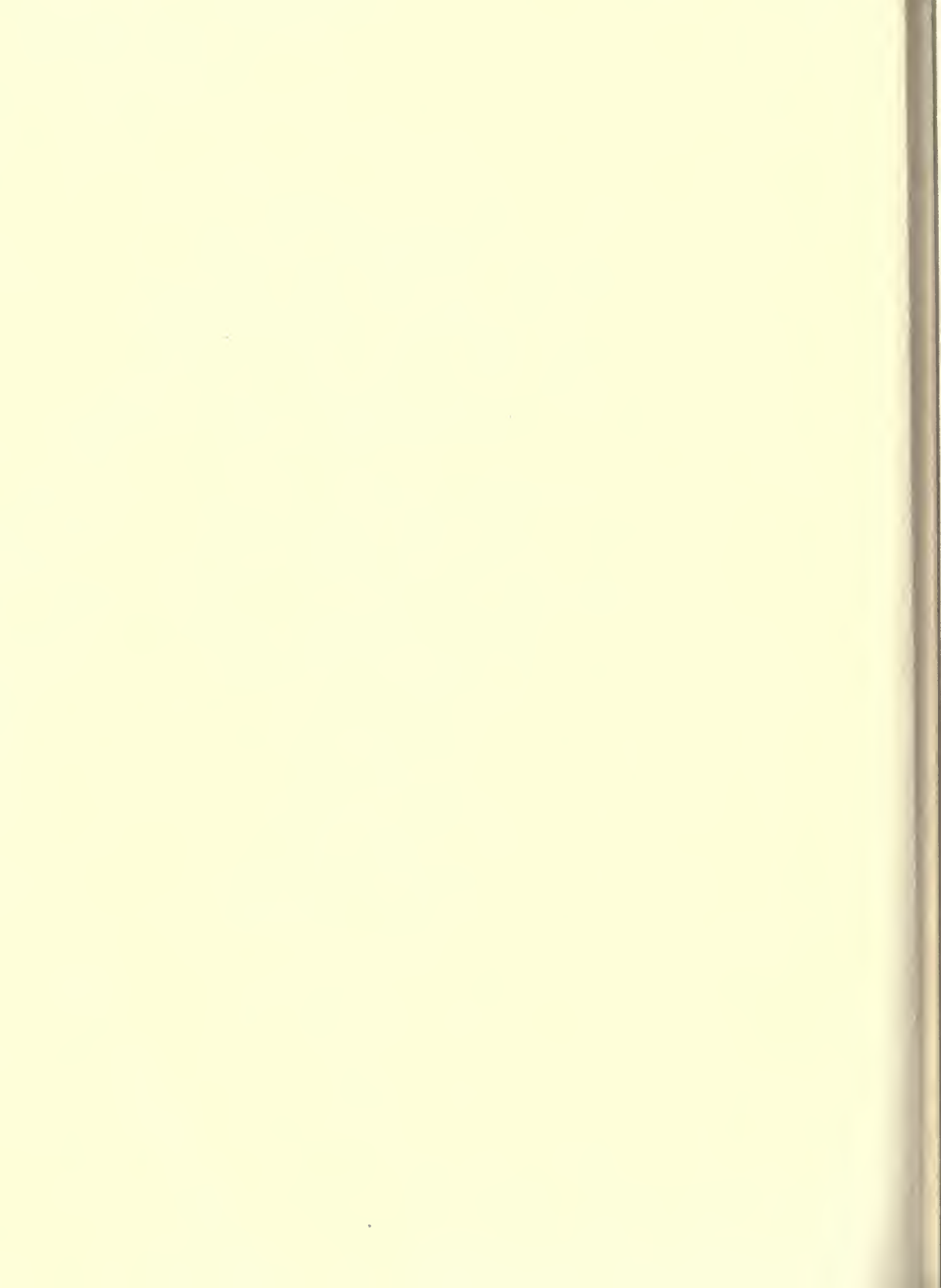
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